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THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

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FAIRMEAD COLONY

by

Mrs. Bea Fuller Baumback

The San Joaquin Valley was first used by the European settlers for cattle ranges and then became great grain fields. Later, however, it was found that with the use of water upon the land, fruit and alfalfa could be raised easily. Irrigation, however, required different types of settlement, for water can best be in districts where the fields lie near together, in order to utilize water districts or electricity. The use of water also made more compact settlements possible, for fruit growing and alfalfa not only gave a more profitable yield per acre but required much more labor. The transformation from grain fields to fruit and alfalfa ranches was accomplished by means of colonies. The Fairmead Colony was a good example of those in Madera County.

It was founded in 1912 by The Co-operative Land & Trust Co. of Palo Alto, J. S. Cone, Vice President and A.M. Thompson, Secretary. It was divided into six "Colonies"; later two more were added. W. R., George G., Henry and Earl Girard, brothers, were the local promoters, and the Co-op eventually spread afield, with Henry going to Los Angeles in charge of that office.

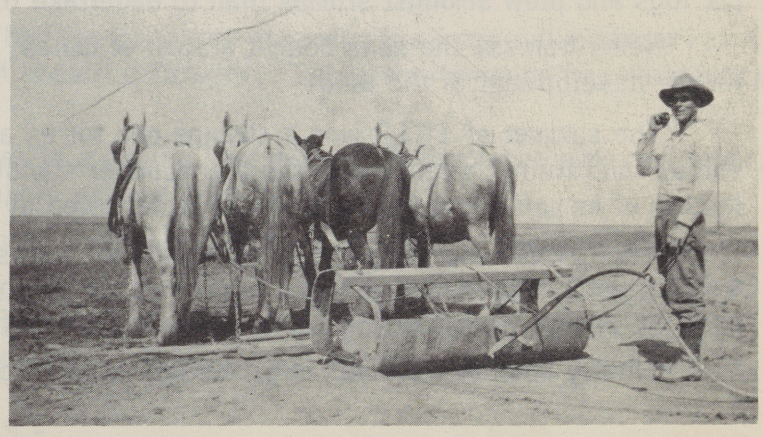
Some of the owners of the large grain ranches that became the Fairmead Colonies were: H.A. Buchenau & John Olcese; H. J. Buchenau; A.D. & N.W. Cook; Edward P., John W., Thos. F. & James S. McCabe, bachelor brothers; Chas. H. Brown; Orville Garlinghouse; H. J. Patterson & Claude Hining; Sharon Estates and M. Joyce.

This co-operative was not "new at the game." They had already colonized Livingston, Atwater, Merced and Winton in Merced County. In order to "spread the word," they extended to established real estate outlets, "the courtesy" of handling promotion in different areas, as well as newspaper advertising and their own representatives. As examples: they set up an office in Riverside, California, replete with pictures of existing ranches, farms and homes in the area (not always in the Fairmead Colonies) as well as posters; and as soon as their paper, "The Fairmead Herald," was printed, there was always a supply to give out to anyone interested, as it did a very good job of telling of the "successes"; (articles from some of the early papers will follow).

An example of one family, attracted by the Riverside office was the H. R. Lakin family, who had come from Illinois in 1911.

Then the real estate firm of Kearns & Lawbacker in Ventura, California, who had been extended "the courtesy" in their area through re-

Dick Raymond



latives learned that the Mac Jamisons, Ulie and Milt Raymonds of Santa Ynez wished to relocate. They came, surveyed the situation and moved up in 1912 to be followed by their friends and neighbors in 1913, the R.J. Fullers, Mike Hourihans, John Parkers, Ed Campbells and Sam MacMurrays.

It might be interesting to note that an agent from the Phoenix, Arizona, Salt River Valley promotion project was competing with the Fairmead agents and the Fairmead Colony won out. One of the gimmicks that the Ventura representatives used was a cigar boxful of dirt, allegedly from Fairmead, which was shown to the prospective settlers in Santa Ynez by Mr. Kearns. I might add that it was a sample of very good "Mother Earth" that was being shown, good enough that the prospective settlers wanted to see more of it.

Mr. Parker's grandsons are still located on the home place in Fairmead; Bill Campbell is still living on the original place on Ave. 20; and Sid Fuller, Grace Fuller and Bea Fuller Baumback are still living on the old Buchenau property that their father acquired.

There was also a group of German "Mennonite Brethern" who settled around what is now the Dixieland School. It was named Munich by them in 1912, after Munich, where one of their leaders had come from. In 1914, a community meeting was held and a vote taken to rename the district, due to the patriotic fervor, fomented by World War I. Mr. R. O. Hobbs suggested that it be named Dixieland, after Dixieland in Imperial County from whence he had come. The suggestion was seconded by Mr. Richard Gibbs, and a vote was taken in favor of Dixieland without any further talk.

The Land Company laid out a pretentious townsite, with a park, no less, as well as a center parkway, the length of the two main streets, together with cement curbing. The parkway was planted to trees and shrubs the second year. Vestiges of the street parkway may still be seen in Fairmead of today.

For an "on the spot" report of Fairmead in its beginning, we will let you read what Mrs. J. T. Bell, one of the colonists, wrote and read at the third Thanksgiving reunion, entitled "Pioneer History." The Co-operative Land and Trust Company commenced selling land in March, 1912. The family composed of Mr. & Mrs. J. T. Bell, their two sons, W.S. and John Bell and wife came to the then so-called "Fairmead" on May 3, 1912. Quoting from Mrs. J. T. Bell:

"We arrived in Califa at 6 o'clock in the morning. Our two sons had previously come up from Los Angeles, looked over the land and made a purchase. When we got off the train, all that could be seen was a vast grain field. Of course, this was new to us. We had never seen anything of the kind before.

'We were amused, amazed, and thunder-struck, when our sons announced they had purchased land in a place like this. We started to search for a hotel. The Fairmead Inn was not finished nor furnished like it is today. There was one bunk house. The moving picture gallery was not finished. Those were all the structures here at that time. It was not long before tents were dotted here and there. There was only one well, situated on the west side of the hotel, where man and beast got water.

"Our first view of Fairmead will never be erased from our memories. What was there here to attract anybody? We were the first English speaking family here. We stayed at the Inn until we got tents erected and received our shipment of household furniture (by rail).

"Mr. Bell was very much discouraged. He had pioneered in Ohio, but he stated that he would rather cut logs and plow amongst stumps than to undertake to work the soil at Fairmead.

"Nevertheless, the sons bought a span of mules, wagon, farming implements and outfitted themselves for the development of the land.

"The summer of 1912 was a strange one for us as we had always been used to the rain and the green verdue; and living in tents with the thermometer standing at 115 was certainly trying, but we had the satisfaction of knowing that the days would be followed by delightful nights.

"We survived the summer even if we did all feel sick and blue. We did have one shower of rain, but it was not until November that rain could be counted upon. Then, fortunately, it always rained at night, apparently in order that the rainy season might not interfere with the work.

"Finally another well was dug, the tank was erected and the hotel found convenient improvements in

Old Buchenau Home Place --- 1913

the installation of hot and cold water facilities, and what was most delightful, we could take a bath occasionally. We certainly did enjoy the privilege, and when an electric fan was provided for the hotel, we commenced to feel more like we were at home.

"Church services were started in the dining room of the hotel. I was the first to take my English Bible. We were of different nationalities, but we understood each other, for we were worshipping the same God and aiming for the same home.

"A baseball team was soon organized. This drew enthusiastic crowds which helped further to relieve the monotony.

"After a while, a school was started in one of the halls. Miss Schultz, the teacher, gave us some welcome entertainment which we all enjoyed.

"We also had our first wedding, in which we all engaged in the festivities. The happy couple were Miss Gendy Klassen and Mr. Henry Isaac.

"The ladies organized an improvement club which furnished enthusiasm and lively times. This club and the associations formed through it will always be remembered as marking the real beginning of the Fairmead Colony.

"We dug a well on our holdings, and after the harvest, commenced the erection of two houses. In September we abandoned the tents for houses on what is called the Bell Ranch.

"When we recall what has been done in and around Fairmead and Dixieland, we think it is marvelous as we look today, and realize the growth that has taken place about us. Lovely homes, churches, school houses, boulevards, parks and business houses, all making such a rapid growth in such a short time.

"We as a people should feel proud that we have had the privilege of seeing the practically barren land produce grain, alfalfa, vegetables, fruit, berries and beautiful flowers. This transformation has taken place in two short years.

"Poultry has been a success. The dairy business is a paying investment. It has taken time and labor, but man must not expect fruitage from land without labor, patience and water.

"For amusements we had moving pictures, baseball, foot races, ice cream socials, and the like.

"I have no complaint to make. If sorrow had not come to our home I think we all would have been perfectly satisfied and we would have a lovely home by this time, for I love our situation. We thank you all for past favors and your sympathy in the loss of our dear son, and wish you all success, and this Thanks-

Fairmead Inn

giving Day is one long to be remembered, and may we as a people appreciate the kindness of the Co-operative Land & Trust Co."

FAIRMEAD INN

January 17, 1914

The Fairmead Inn, in the town of Fairmead, is the popular headquarters for commercial men, tourists, automobile parties, and visitors to this section of the valley. The Inn is frequented by the representative people of this section; is the rendezvous for capitalists, investors, realtors, land buyers, and business-men, as well as others who come to Fairmead, because they find at the Fairmead Inn, pleasant and congenial accommodations and a hotel presided over by one of the most energetic and entertaining managers in the San Joaquin Valley.

The Inn is one story in height, has about 30 guest rooms, is equipped with modern conveniences, such as electric lights, hot and cold water in rooms, ladies' parlor and waiting room, long distance telephone, and other arrangements that make the house pleasant for guests and visitors.

The dining room is one of the interesting features of the hotel. The cuisine is thoroughly modern, with all the delicacies of the season served at meals, such as one finds on the tables of modern hotels. The cooking is all that could be desired, the dinner being prepared by a competent chef and served by polite and interesting girl waitresses.

Some businesses in Fairmead in January, 1914 were:

Clarence Pitzer, agent of the Niagara and London Insurance Co.
A. R. Black, pool room and cigar stand.
F. Tomms, blacksmith from Pasadena; he was followed by Joe Bradhoff in about 1920
Fairmead Herald, newspaper, edited by Geo. W. Steward, augmented by Chas. Mosteller's Enterprise in 1914.
D. Bushman, General Merchandise --- A. Helm, plumber and tinner.
Geo. Ingram, plasterer and pit digging.
W. G. Cole, F. Hoopes, R. E. Rehrig, J. W. Croot, J. T. Duerkesen and M. Hoffman, carpenters.
G. G Whittall and assistant Bert Bandy, ran a garage.
P. N. Reynolds from Atwater; R. A. Baldwin, succeeded by W.C. and B.D. Bandy, were well drillers.

This garage building was the old Fairmead Cheese Factory and when it went broke, early in 1920, Joe Bradhoff bought it and moved it from the west side of the RR tracks (next to the lumber yard), to the east of old 99 in Fairmead across the street from the Fairmead Store. Joe Bradhoff is the man on the right in the picture; not sure of the other man.

Fish & "Pete" Peterson from Los Angeles
W. G. Metcalf, pumps and motors.
B. J. Primmer, cement pipe.
A. L. Hoover, Manager, Fairmead Lumber Company

Dairying ---The excellence of alfalfa growth at Fairmead makes dairying particularly profitable. The Sayre Creamery near Madera furnishes a market at a good price for milk and cream.

Churches---The Presbyterian Church was organized May 11, 1913 with the Rev. John W. Dorrance, pastor. The Mennonite Church was organized and built in Dixieland in 1913, Rev. C. Wittenberg, minister.

News item in the January, 1914 Herald---the B & F Cheese Co. of Wasco built a cheese factory in Fairmead that operated for about two years.

THE HISTORY OF SECTION 5, TOWNSHIP 11 S, RANGE 16 E

I thought it might be interesting to follow the owners of a certain piece of land in the Colony from the patent to the present, so I chose the piece of land my Dad purchased when our family came here from Santa Ynez in 1913.

It is part of Section 5, Township 11 South, Range 16 East, at the very southern edge of the colony; it bordered Miller & Lux land on the south and Dairyland Colony on the west.

William S. Chapman, San Francisco financier, patented 10-3/4 sections in this Township, which included Section 5---he also patented many, many other sections in the San Joaquin Valley. The patent was dated May 1, 1869 and signed by President Ulysses S. Grant. Chapman had previously sold the above mentioned land, all of Township 13 (save 1/2 section) plus 3-1/2 sections in Township 14, all

in Range 19 on November 30, 1868 to John W. Pearson of San Francisco.

Chapman had invested heavily in the San Joaquin & Kings River Canal and Irrigation Company in 1871 and according to Treadwell in The Cattle King, "Chapman, the leading spirit in the enterprise, lost his vast eastside lands to the Scotch capitalists, who had advanced him money, and all his west-side lands fell under the control of Henry Miller."

In December, 1869, several sections including Section 5 were deeded to Charles W. Stevens of San Francisco, who sold to an R. S. Mattison of Vallejo in March, 1869, who in turn signed a quit-claim to Chas. W. Stevens in September, 1970; finally after several paper transfers among the financiers, it was deeded to Geo. Harris of San Francisco in September, 1872. Harris sold it to Corne - lius Collins of San Francisco in May, 1877. He must have improved the land, for in May of '79, when he sold it to Henry Miller and Chas. Lux, his address was listed as Fresno County.

Then, in March, 1883, Thomas F. Desmond, who owned land around Berendo, also owned 1080 acres at what was then known as the Monte,---Fresno River - Bonita Gin area---. This 1080 acres was situated so that Miller & Lux owned land all around it; in effect it was a thorn in Henry Miller's side, so he proposed to Thos. Desmond to trade him Sections 4 & 5 comprising 1284.84 acres in exchange for his Monte property. This deal was consummated in March, 1883.

Thos. Desmond was born in Ireland, and as a young lad shipped out as a sailor. From there, he spent some time in Australia, again shipped into San Francisco, arriving after the Gold Rush. He left his ship in San Francisco and went up into the Auburn area; next we find him in Merced for a short stay. From there he came to the Monte, then Berendo and Section 5. Whether he was in the sheep business in Merced, I couldn't be sure, but when he arrived at the Monte, he raised sheep. Mrs. Desmond was Mary Ann Griffin, sister of John M. & Bill Griffin. The Desmonds were grandparents of the Desmonds living in Madera today.

On April 12, 1888, Mr. Desmond petitioned the Board of Supervisors for a road, which is now our Avenue 18 from the railroad west to Road 17. This was needed because all land adjoining was planted to grain, with no access to the railroad.

The next owner was Hubert A. Buchenau, father of the late H. J. Buchenau and John Olcese, in September, 1903. They in turn deeded this section, together with others to the Co-operative Land and Trust Co. in 1912. Mr. Buchenau and Mr. Olcese were brothers-in-law, each having married one of the Gazzola sisters. Mrs. Buchenau, Alida, was born at Bear Valley and Mr. Buchenau was born in Hornitos in the early '50's; his father had immigrated from Alsace-Lorraine, Germany to California before the Gold Rush.

The Land Company divided the sections up into lots and my father, R. J. Fuller purchased lots in Section 5 in late 1912. Mr. & Mrs. Sid Fuller, Miss Grace A. Fuller, and I, Mrs. Bea Fuller Baumback, all own their homes on this original Section 5. To my knowledge, we and William Campbell, on Avenue 20 are the only people who came here in 1912 & 13 still living on the original purchases. I believe there are several who were born after arriving; in some cases, there are grandchildren living on the original places.

My Dad and two brothers, plus a hired man, loaded all our belongings on two wagons and trailed a spring wagon, one wagon was pulled by 6 horses driven by Sid and a four-horse team driven by my Dad. They trailed some young mules, horses, and a saddle horse. They left Santa Ynez and came via Zaca Ranch, Sisquoc, Santa Maria, Edna, San Luis Grade, Santa Margarita, Creston, Rock Springs, Sunflower Valley, up around the Avenal hills, Huron (stock wouldn't drink the alkali water so we went northeast to some sheep troughs to water), Wheatville, Helm, McMillan Grade (levee), Kerman, past Mordecai's and into the Buchenau Ranch, our new home, arriving Saturday, March 29, 1912. It took 11 days to come the approximately 240 miles; they were slowed up one day with about one-half inch of rain which made the roads, and grades, rather slippery (remember there was no pavement of any kind). They brought a one-week old colt, kept in a place in the back of one of the wagons, which proved to be a curiosity to everyone that passed.

The picture of the Parkway in 1919 is the strip that was just in front of the garage. Mrs. Bradhoff has always kept it up as long as she lived there even after Joe died. She lives in Chowchilla at the present time.

There were about 40 acres of alfalfa the first year and they irrigated it with a 20 HP gas engine. My Dad converted to an electric motor as soon as the power lines could be strung out that fall. Quoting my brother's letter to his cousin dated May 4, 1913, "The way it is now, one fellow has to irrigate and the other tend the engine, but with electricity all you have to do is turn on the power and go out and irrigate." Those of us who were brought up with electricity do not realize all they had to put up with before its coming. He also states, "Madera is quite a town, and in the new town of Fairmead, there is a park laid out and three fine concrete buildings and other small houses. I think it will be a pretty place after awhile. We get our mail there and at Berendo."

When we first came here the place was referred to as the "Old Buchenau Home-Place" as the Buchenaus had lived here ever since they purchased it. I have not been able to determine just who built the original buildings that are shown in the picture as it was in 1913, but presume that it was either Tom Desmond or one of the previous owners.

THANKSGIVING REUNIONS---There were three annual Thanksgiving dinners held in Fairmead. I have taken the information from the Fairmead Herald and the Enterprise in 1914.

Thanksgiving Day at Fairmead---1912

It was a notable gathering of colonists at Fairmead on Thanksgiving day who enjoyed the bountiful dinner spread out in the open air 'neath sunny skies, and one which showed the rapid growth of the new colonies as well.

The busy farmer laid aside his work for the day; the plow and scraper were left in the field; the sound of the hammer was stilled; the farmer and family hied away---for a gladsome day.

Settlers began coming in long before the dinner hour and were grouped about the Fairmead Inn or gathered on the wide veranda discussing their plans for developing their land or building their homes. Many acquaintances and lasting friendships were, no doubt, begun this day, which shall endure through the years to come; everyone was as enthusiastic as to the future of Fairmead and their colony lands.

All the while---the several committees were laying the cloths and loading the table with the bountiful spread. Mrs. Will Gerard was head chairman; Miss Schultz, the teacher was in charge of tables.

On one end of the veranda were a half dozen tables where five men carved the juicy Thanksgiving birds, the savory meat heaped in great pans, the bread, pumpkin pies, baked beans, salads, cranberry sauce, doughnuts and cakes were arranged on tables ready to serve. At 12:-30, when all was in readiness, a bell sounded the call to dinner. Rev. T.F. Nelson, a resident of the colony, made appropriate remarks of the Thanksgiving custom of our forefathers. All were seated at a long table, which was about one hundred feet long with benches on both sides, decorated with pumpkin bowls filled with apples or chrysanthemums.

There were 300 lbs. of dressed turkey, 60 loaves of bread, 50 homemade pumpkin pies, baked sweet potatoes, all kinds of salads and gallons of hot coffee and splendid water from the town well.

The turkeys were grown on the colony at the Frost Ranch, which is one of the old ranch sites. The fowls have had the run of the alfalfa fields and were more delicious than when fed on grain alone. They were provided by the Co-operative Land and Trust Co. and cooked by the ladies of the colony.

Nearly three hundred persons partook of the spread. There were visitors present from Madera, Palo Alto, Merced and Winton. A photographer was on hand and pictured the dinner scene, which appears in this issue of the Historian. The colonists gathered from all parts of California and even from the cold north-west and eastern states; many there were who expressed their great pleasure in being able to spend the day so pleasantly out in the beautiful sunshine so like the late summertime. Many more in colder climes would gladly have exchanged theirs for our out-door Thanksgiving festival, for it was a perfect California day.

When the golden sun began to drop low in the west, the happy people went their several ways, satisfied with their colony and its promotors; glad in their hearts that they were residents of Fairmead and glad, too, that they had heeded when opportunity knocked at their door.

Nearly 700 people partook of dinner and enjoyed the second year's Thanksgiving dinner in 1913. In front of the Fairmead Inn ten tables were spread with all the good things that go to make up a Thanksgiving Turkey dinner, again furnished by the Land Co. and prepared by the women of the colony again. Almost the same menu as the first year was served, only this year it took 60 turkeys and the rest in proportion. Seated on the porch of the Inn overlooking the scene, the Madera Concert Band with Prof. Ludders leading, played until 3:00 p.m.

Ex-Senator Geo. W. Cartwright of Fresno addressed the people who were there. He paid high tribute to the Co-operative people, saying that it was his first experience of seeing a real estate salesman sitting with his "victims" and eating a hearty dinner with them, and getting away with it without being molested.

Mr. Cartwright said that the eyes of the world are at present centered upon the great State of California of which Fairmead is the "geographical center" and as such, Fairmead will attract a goodly portion of the homeseekers who will come to California to attend the great exposition which will be held in San Francisco in 1915. (This is of special interest to old timers)---He looked forward to the time when the legislative bodies of this state will heed the will of the people and construct an immense irrigation and reclamation project to irrigate the entire Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. One which will necessitate the building of an immense dam at Red Bluff in the Sacramento valley with a canal skirting the Sierra Nevada mountains going south as far as the base of the Tehachapi, then to the west side of the valley, and going north to Byron where the surplus waters will empty in the bays.

The last and final reunion was held on Thanksgiving, 1914, with fully one thousand people. Judge Wm. M. Conley of Madera, the speaker, reminisced about the gradual development of the San Joaquin valley. Judge Conley was one of the men who was active in the organization of the county government. He was accompanied to Fairmead by J.M. Griffin, who was also one of the promoters of the division. One of the Judge's recollections was the journey by train through Chowchilla and Fairmead on the return from Sacramento after the Legislature had acted favorably upon the application for county division in 1893. He stated then that it was their mutual agreement that some day the plains would be cut up into small and prosperous ranches, sustaining a large population where industry would

continued...

find a home.

"It was this faith in the future of Madera County which justified the acts of those who then worked for a Madera County and who have since worked for a better and more prosperous Madera County."

(We wish we could have included all of the material that Mrs. Baumback gave to us but space would not permit. She should be commended for her time and effort as well as thoroughness.)

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NOTES. . . .

The 75th Anniversary Celebration is well on its way under the Diamond Jubilee Committee headed by Ralph Baraldi, a member of the Board of Directors of the Madera County Historical Society. A complete report on this committee's achievements will be in the October Historian.

* * *

A new book is now available, "Thunder in the Mountains," by Hank Johnston. This is a story of the life and times of the lumbering industry of Madera County, especially the Madera Sugar Pine Company. The book is now available in Madera County. Along with a very interesting narrative, the book is well illustrated with photographs, and maps. If interested, please contact the Madera County Historical Society, P.O. Box 478, Madera, California 93637, or phone---673-0291. Price of book is $6.95, plus tax.

* * *

There will be four special issues of the Madera Daily Tribune, beginning May 7. Contact that office for copies.

DIAMOND JUBILEE

KING AND QUEEN

for

1968

SEND YOUR SUGGESTIONS TO US.

OLD TIMERS' DAY

will be held on

SEPTEMBER 29, 1968

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THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

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